Import of non-edible oil

†2962. SHRI RAMADHAR KASHYAP: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the import of non-edible oil has reached up to 1,25,129 tonnes till November, 2006;

(b) if so, the reasons for the increase of 89.5 per cent in import of non-edible oil in comparison to 66017 tonnes of the last year;

(c) whether it is a fact that seven concerned officers have been suspended under this import scam;

(d) if so, the loss of payment of taxes or duties in thousands crore rupees suffered by Government due to this scam; and

(e) the present status of the enquiry of this scam?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Government is aware that there has been an increase in the import of non-edible oils. No specific reasons can be attributed for such increase.

(c) to (e) No case of import-scam in respect of non-edible oils has come to the notice. However suitable alerts have been issued to the field formations to check mis-declaration.

Updating of passbooks by banks

2963. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is mandatory for the banks to update the passbooks of their respective customers periodically and regularly;

(b) whether it is a fact that most of the Nationalised Banks, particularly the State Bank of Patiala in Gurgaon, refuse to update the passbooks on one pretext or the other, thereby putting the customers, particularly aged and retired customers, to a lot of inconvenience; and

(c) if so, what measures are proposed to be taken to ensure that the bank staff perform their duties in this regard?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Yes, Sir. As per Reserve Bank of India (RBI) guidelines issued from time to time, it is mandatory for all scheduled commercial banks, including State Bank of Patiala, to update the passbooks on an on-going basis.

(b) and (c) No, Sir, However, updating of passbooks is sometimes affected temporarily when the passbook printer is not functional due to technical reasons. In such circumstances statement of account can be issued to the customers to avoid inconvenience. Standby printers are also provided by banks at the Controlling Offices for meeting such contingencies at branches.

Saving-cum-Lending Programme for SHGs

2964. SHRI K.P.K. KUMARAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the innovative Saving-cum-Lending Programme for Self-Help Groups sponsored by NABARD in collaboration with the Postal Department has been launched;

(b) if so, what are the field reports so far;

(c) whether as per original plan, two districts in Tamil Nadu were selected and how many other districts in Tamil Nadu have been selected for the Second Phase; and

(d) when will the entire State of Tamil Nadu be covered under this Programme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The innovative Saving-cum-Lending Programme for SHGs sponsored by NABARD in collaboration with the Postal Department has been launched on 15 December, 2006. The Programme aims to utilize the vast network of the Department of Posts and the networking potential of the rural postman to extend the outreach of credit. As the scheme has been launched recently, it is too early to assess its impact.

(c) and (d) The pilot phase is being implemented in 2 districts *viz.*